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(54) Title: REFORMING PROCESS AND APPARATUS**(57) Abstract**

This disclosure relates to a processor comprising means (10, 11, 12, 110, 111, 112) for mixing a process material with a process liquid (13, 113) (such as water) and forming an emulsion or slurry. Means (17, 18, 21, 24, 117, 120) is provided for pressuring (16, 26, 116, 126) and heating (61, 36, 173, 227) the slurry, and the slurry is then fed to means (28, 128) for quickly reducing the pressure (27, 127) and further increasing the temperature (33, 227). The rapid drop in pressure and increase in temperature causes components of the slurry to convert to volatile gases and separate from the remainder of the slurry which is removed from the processor in the form of solids (32, 132). The gas is fed to one or more condensers (10, 63, 64, 65, 177, 178) which separate the gas into useful liquids such as various grades of oil.

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REFORMING PROCESS AND APPARATUS

Reference to Related Applications

U.S. Serial No. 08/110,290, filed August 20, 1993, is a continuation-in-part application from U.S. Serial No. 07/946,939, filed September 17, 1992, and titled REFORMING PROCESS AND APPARATUS.

Technical Field

This invention relates generally to a chemical reforming apparatus and process, and more particularly to a thermal depolymerization processor
5 for converting organic and/or inorganic materials into different more usable products.

Background Prior Art

Numerous systems have been proposed in the past for converting waste materials into useful products. For example, the following listed U.S. patents describe systems which purport to convert organic waste materials into useful products such as oil and gas:

	NUMBER	PATENTEE	DATE
	4,108,730	CHEN et al.	08/22/78
10	4,175,211	CHEN et al.	11/20/79
	4,118,281	YAN	10/03/78
	4,935,038	WOLF	06/19/90
	4,636,318	BAKER	01/13/87
	4,842,692	BAKER	06/27/89
15	4,842,728	BAKER	06/27/89
	4,923,604	BAKER	05/08/90

Further, Shimizu Patent No. 4,203,838 describes a system for processing sludge, and Ohsol Patent No. 4,938,876 describes a system for separating oil, gas and solids.

It is a general object of the present invention to provide an improved process for converting a process material such as organic materials (coal and/or organic waste) and inorganic materials into useful oils, gas and solids.

Summary of the Invention

Generally, in a first embodiment, a processor in accordance with this invention is shown that comprises means for mixing a process material with a process liquid (such as water) and forming an emulsion or slurry. Means is provided for pressuring and heating the slurry, and the slurry is then fed to means for quickly reducing the pressure to a relatively low value and further increasing the temperature. The rapid drop in pressure and increase in temperature causes components of the slurry to convert to volatile gas and separate from the remainder of the slurry which is removed from the processor in the form of solids. The gas is fed to one or more condensers which separate the gas into useful liquids such as various grades of oil.

In a second embodiment, a processor and method are disclosed for converting a process material into other useful products that includes a hopper connected to a material input conduit which receives and preheats the process material. A separate liquid tank is connected to a liquid input conduit for receiving a process liquid, such as water. The material input conduit and the liquid input conduit are connected to a mixing joint and a pump for mixing the process material with the process liquid to form a flowable slurry for passing the slurry into a first slurry conduit. The first slurry conduit is connected to a first reactor.

The first reactor is adapted for receiving the slurry, for heating the slurry to a first preestablished temperature and for applying a first pressure to the slurry. A second reactor is connected to the first reactor and is adapted for receiving and reducing the pressure applied to the slurry to a second preestablished pressure, for heating the slurry to a

second preestablished temperature, and for reforming the slurry into a first by-product and a second by-product. First collection means are attached to the second reactor for receiving the first by-product. A
5 condenser is also connected to the second reactor for receiving and cooling the second by-product and for separating the second by-product into a third by-product and a fourth by-product.

10 Other advantages and aspects of the present invention will become apparent upon reading the following description of the drawings and detailed description of the invention.

Brief Description of Drawings

The invention will be better understood from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the figures of the drawings, wherein:

5 Figure 1 is a diagram illustrating a processor constructed in accordance with a first preferred embodiment of this invention;

 Figure 2 is a diagram illustrating a processor constructed in accordance with a second
10 preferred embodiment of the present invention;

 Figure 3 is a schematic cross-sectional view taken along line 3-3 in Fig. 2;

 Figure 4 is a schematic cross-sectional view taken along line 4-4 in Fig. 2;

15 Figure 5 is a schematic cross-sectional view taken along line 5-5 in Fig. 2; and,

 Figure 6 is a sectional view of the first reactor of Fig. 2.

Detailed Description

While this invention is susceptible of embodiment in many different forms, there is shown in the drawings and will herein be described in detail a preferred embodiment of the invention with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be considered as an exemplification of the principles of the invention and is not intended to limit the broad aspect of the invention to embodiment illustrated.

While a processor constructed in accordance with this invention may be used to process a variety of organic and inorganic materials, the following description of the first embodiment relates to specific examples wherein the material being processed (the process material) is coal and the liquid (the process liquid) mixed with the process material is water.

Turning to Figure 1, which shows first embodiment, small pieces of process material (anthracite coal nuggets in this specific example) are loaded into a hopper 10 which feeds the coal into a grinder 11. In a continuous flow system, a steady flow of coal would go into the hopper whereas in a batch system discrete quantities of coal would be introduced. The ground up pieces of coal move to an emulsifier 12 that mixes the coal with water and forms a coal-water emulsion or suspension. The amount of water may be approximately 50 to 100% (mass to mass) of the coal. The water is fed into the emulsifier through a tube 13 which receives recycled water as will be described hereinafter. The emulsion leaves through a flow conduit or pipe 14 connected to the intake of a high pressure pump 16 that discharges the mixture through a pipe connected to the coils 18 of a heat exchanger. The coils 18 receive heat from a main condenser column 19 to be described further hereinafter, and the emulsion is further heated by flowing through a pipe 21

mounted in the enclosure 22 of the heating unit 23. The pipe 21 includes a heat exchanger coil 24 mounted in the upper portion of the enclosure 22.

The portion of the processor including the
5 outlet of the pump 16, the pipe 17, the coil 18, the pipe 21 and the coil 24 may be referred to as the low-temperature-high-pressure (LTHP) portion of the system. At the emulsifier 12, the coal and the water may be at essentially ambient pressure and temperature,
10 whereas in the coil 24 the temperature and the pressure may be increased to approximately 250° C and 500 to 700 psi (relative pressure). The pressure in the LTHP portion is a function of the temperature and the volume of the pipe 21, and in this portion the coal becomes
15 hydrated or saturated with water. The rate of flow of the emulsion and the length of the tube should be adjusted so that there is about a twenty minute dwell time in the high pressure part of the processor, to allow sufficient time for the reaction under high
20 pressure. The high pressure keeps volatile components dissolved and in the solution. The operating parameters of temperature, pressure, the flow velocity and the dwell time must be balanced to produce the above dwell time and pressure and to keep the particles
25 in suspension.

The outlet of the coil 24 is connected to a valve 26 that acts as a differential pressure regulator. The outlet 27 of the valve 26 opens into an expansion container 28 wherein the pressure is reduced
30 almost instantly to between approximately 0 and 200 psi (relative pressure). The incoming material is also quickly heated to approximately 350° to 500° C. A portion of the system including the container 28 may be referred to as the high-temperature-low-pressure (HTLP)
35 portion of the processor. The sudden drop in the pressure combined with the sharp increase in

temperature causes the slurry to separate into solids and volatile gas. The gas leaves the container through an outlet pipe 29 connected to the upper end of the container 28 and the solids fall to the bottom of the container 28 where they are removed by, for example, an
5 auger 31. In the case where coal is fed into the processor, coke is removed and temporarily stored in a lower bin 32.

 The container 28 of the HTLP portion is
10 heated by a gas burner 33 mounted around the bottom of the container 28 within the enclosure 22. A tube 34 receives a gas product of the processor and feeds it to the burner 33. The container 28 and the burner 33 are mounted in the enclosure 22 along with the coil 24 and
15 the pipe 21, and consequently the burning gas heats these components. The burner exhaust is discharged through a chimney portion 36 of the enclosure 22, the pipe 21 extending through the chimney portion to make maximum utilization of the heat.

20 The gas in the outlet pipe 29 is fed to the interior of the previously mentioned main condenser column 19 where the pressure and the temperature are regulated to cause water and oil to condense and separate from the volatile components which remain in a
25 gaseous state. Regulation is accomplished by a heat exchanger including a first coil 41 mounted within the chimney portion 36 of the enclosure 22, and a second coil 42 which encircles the condense column 19. Pipes 43 connect the two coils 41 and 42 and a regulator pump
30 44 circulates a heat exchange fluid (such as oil) through the coils to transfer heat from the chimney portion 36 to the column 19 as needed.

 The oil and the water move downwardly through a trap 46 to a reservoir 47 where they naturally
35 separate due to their different weights. A first pump 48 and tubes 49 remove the oil to a storage tank 51. A

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second pump 52 and tubes 53 remove the water and pass it through a sulfur removal unit 54 and a control valve 56 to the emulsifier 12, thereby recycling the water.

The relatively hot volatile gas moves
5 upwardly through an upper portion 61 of the main or primary condenser column 19, the heat exchanger coil 18 extending around the upper portion 61 so that the slurry in the LTHP part of the system is heated by the gas leaving the column 19. Connected to the upper end
10 of the main condenser column 19 is a pipe 62 which feeds the hot volatile gas to a series of secondary condenser columns 63, 64 and 65. The gas gradually decreases in temperature and increases in pressure as it moves through the secondary columns, and the
15 pressure and temperature determine the condensate drawn off in each condenser stage. In this specific example, the gas is at about atmospheric pressure and 180° C entering the first stage 63 and kerosine is produced and drawn off to a tank 67. A condenser pump 68
20 connects the two stages 63 and 64 and gas enters the stage 64 at about atmospheric pressure and 110° C, and toluene is drawn off and fed to a tank 69. Another pump 71 connects the stages 64 and 65 and the gas enters the stage 65 at atmospheric pressure and 30° C, and
25 gasoline is drawn off to a tank 72.

Any remaining gas is fed to a storage tank 73 from the last condenser stage 65, and the previously mentioned tube or pipe 34 is connected to receive gas from the tank 73 for operating the burner 33. Another
30 tube 74 is connected to the tube 34 and the storage tank 73 and is connected to receive a combustible gas from a commercial source (not illustrated). By this arrangement, the processor may be started in operation utilizing gas from the commercial source. Once the
35 processor is running and producing gas, the tube 74 to the commercial source may be turned off and the burner

33 operated by gas produced by the processor. Of course, if the processor produces more gas than can be utilized to power the processor, the surplus gas may be drawn off and sold commercially.

5 Thus, the system receives coal and, without producing pollution, converts the coal into a number of valuable products. The coke in the bin 32 is a valuable source of low pollution heat; the quality and purity of the coke is a function of the temperature in
10 the heating unit 23, the purest coke being produced at the high temperature of about 500° C. The sulfur removed by the unit 54 may also have commercial value, and the oil in the container 51 may find use as, for example, heating oil.

15 After the HTLP unit the coal slurry is chemically reformed and no longer has the physical attributes of the original coal. The pressure in the HTLP unit or container 28 determines the type of liquid-gas products produced in the main and secondary
20 condenser columns. For example, a low pressure (about 0 psi relative) produces light oils rich in aromatic hydrocarbons; higher pressures (about 200 psi relative) produces heavier oils richer in asphaltenes. Because volatilization is the result of heat gain in the unit
25 23, the majority of the heat is contained in the volatile gas which flows to the main condenser coil, and part of the heat is given up to the coil 18 to heat the incoming coal slurry. The rate at which the gas travels up the main condenser column 19 is determined
30 by the pressure in the container 28 which in turn can be adjusted by the operator using the pump-valve 26. The pressures in the secondary condenser stages 68, 64 and 65 may be controlled by the operator using the pumps 68 and 71. Higher pressure results in lower
35 temperature required to liquefy the volatile gas

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components, thus requiring less energy for cooling needed in the liquification process.

While the foregoing specific example relates to the reformation of coal, any other organic or
5 inorganic material may be used, which can be chemically reformed into other products by varying the temperature and the pressure.

As another example, instead of coal, soybeans may be used, and a lower pressure of less than about
10 100 psi (relative pressure) in the LTHP unit would be necessary because soybeans tend to absorb water until they are saturated. In the HTLP unit, the pressure can be adjusted to about 0 to 200 psi (relative) in order to control the molecular weight of the oil desired to
15 be produced. The remainder of the system would be essentially as described previously with respect to coal.

When processing coal, the process liquid may be plain water or a solution of water plus calcium
20 carbonate, sodium or calcium hydroxide. For organic material other than coal, one may use acid hydrolysis utilizing carbonic acid plus water. The processor may also be used to convert HDPE plastic to oil or a 50% mass to mass mixture of plastic and coal may be run to
25 produce coke and oil. This produces an increase in oil of five barrels per ton of coal processed.

While a gas heater has been disclosed for heating the process materials, it will be apparent that other heat sources may be utilized. The valves, pumps,
30 etc. may be operated by hand or by a computerized automatic control.

Turning to Figure 2, which shows a second embodiment, a hopper 110 is provided for receiving the process material. The process material may be any
35 inorganic or organic substance. A material input conduit 114 is connected to the hopper 110 for

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receiving and transporting the process material to a first material pump 116a. As with the first embodiment, a grinder 111 may be employed to chop, pulverize or grind large pieces of material.

5 Additionally, conventional strainers 112 may be put into or adjacent the hopper 110 to prevent large pieces of material from entering the system's conduits. The process material within this material input conduit 114 is driven by either gravity or a pump (not shown).

10 A separate liquid storage reservoir or tank 147 holds a process liquid. The preferable process liquid is water. However, the process liquid can be any organic solvent. Examples include alcohol, toluene, methylene chloride, and hexene. This process liquid
15 flows through a liquid input conduit 113 to a first liquid pump 116b by means of either gravity or a separate pump (not shown).

The process material is pumped by the first material pump 116a to a first slurry conduit 117.

20 Similarly, the process liquid is pumped by the first liquid pump 116b to the first slurry conduit 117. Both pumps are driven by a motor M3. As shown in Figure 2, a mixing joint 117a is disposed between the two pumps 116 and the first slurry conduit 117. In particular,
25 the mixing joint 117a is Y-shaped or T-shaped having two input openings, one input opening being connected to the material input conduit 114 and the other input opening being connected to the liquid input conduit 113. The one output opening is connected to the first
30 slurry conduit 117. As a result of this arrangement, the process liquid and the process material are mixed or emulsified to form or create a flowable liquid-material slurry or emulsion and are put under pressure by the pumps. It is appreciated that this arrangement
35 can be modified so that only one pump, instead of two pumps 116a, 116b, may be employed and that the mixing of

the material and liquid may be done prior to their entering the pumps.

Once the slurry passes the pumps 116a, 116b, the slurry is under pressure. This pressure may be preestablished and is controlled by the interaction between the pumps 116a, 116b, and two output valves 170, 126 and the temperature of the slurry between the pumps and valves.

To assist in either heating or cooling the materials, emulsions, slurries, liquids and gases flowing through the system, various heat transfer techniques are employed. For example, in the system shown in Figure 2, three heat exchangers are incorporated. (Shown schematically in Figures 3, 4 and 5). The process material flowing through the first slurry conduit 117 is preheated by a liquid, in the form of steam traveling in an opposite direction in a concentric exterior pipe 173 (the second branch of the steam conduit). This counterflow heat transfer or exchange technique is shown in Figure 3.

The slurry is further preheated by a liquid in the form of a warmer hot oil product or vapor oil traveling in an opposite direction in a concentric exterior pipe 177 (the second branch of the output conduit). This counterflow heat exchanger is shown in Figure 4. Accordingly, the two heat exchangers are in series along the first slurry conduit 117.

The slurry, under pressure, moves within the first slurry conduit 117 into a first reactor 120. This first reactor 120 receives the slurry and both heats it to a first preestablished temperature and applies a first pressure to it.

It should be noted that at times the first reactor will heat the slurry to a temperature above the temperature the slurry obtained in the first slurry conduit; at other times, the first reactor will heat

the slurry to the same temperature the slurry obtained in the first slurry conduit.

The first reactor 120, shown in detail in Figure 6, is a cylindrical shell 220 having an input end 118 and an output end 121 and internal means for moving the slurry from the input end to the output end. The means for moving the slurry is an internal screw or auger 221. This auger has a central shaft 222 with an attached helical blade 223. The shaft 222 is supported within the first cylindrical reactor by an end bracket 223 supported in end pieces 225 and end blocks 226 bolted together. The screw or auger is driven by an external motor M1 attached to one end of the auger.

External heating means, such as helical heater wires 127 are wrapped around the cylindrical shell 220 of the first reactor 120 to heat the contents. A layer of insulation 228 is placed around the heating wires 127 and the shell 220 to reduce heat loss within the reactor and to prevent injury or damage to people and items located external the reactor 120.

While an internal auger is shown, a tube heat exchanger and a burner, like heat exchanger coil 24 and burner 33 of the first embodiment (Figure 1), may be employed.

At the output end 121, in an upper position, of the first reactor 120, there is an opening and an escape valve 170 for permitting the controlled flow of steam from the first reactor. This steam, comprised of both water and contaminants, flows through the escape valve 170 and into a first branch of a steam conduit 171. It is, of course, appreciated that the escape valve can be spaced from the first reactor and disposed within the first branch of the steam conduit, which, in turn, is connected to the first reactor.

A separator 172, such as a cyclone separator, is positioned along and within this steam conduit's

first branch 171. This separator 172 separates the heavy material and contaminants from the steam. Consequently, a purer form of steam passes onward within the first branch of the steam conduit 171 to a
5 connected second branch of the steam conduit 173. As shown in Figure 3, the second branch of the steam conduit 173 is concentric with and parallel to first slurry conduit 117. The flow within these concentric conduits 117,173 is counter. As a result, and seen in
10 Figure 2, the slurry flowing from left to right in the first slurry conduit 117 is warmed by the steam flowing from right to left in the external second branch of the steam conduit 173. At the same time, the steam is cooled by the counterflowing cooler slurry.

15 The steam flows from the second branch 173 into and through a third branch of the steam conduit 174 and into the separate liquid storage reservoir or tank 147 which holds the process liquid. The third branch 174 is designed to pass through the hopper 110
20 in order to warm or preheat the process material.

With this design, the process liquid is recycled through the system.

A second flow valve 126 is also at the output end 121 of the first reactor 120 for permitting the
25 controlled flow of the slurry from the first reactor to the second reactor 128. This second flow valve 126 is preferably synchronized with the first flow valve, the escape valve 170. The two valves 126,170 open and close together.

30 A second slurry conduit 122 connects the two reactors 120,128 with the second flow valve 126 disposed therein controlling the flow therebetween. The second flow valve 126 acts as a differential pressure regulator.

35 This portion of the processor including the pumps 116, the first slurry conduit 117, the first

reactor 120 the second slurry conduit 122 and the flow valve 126 may be referred to as the low-temperature-high-pressure (LTHP) portion of the system. As with the first embodiment, the pressure in the LTHP portion of the system is a function of the temperature and the volume of the first reactor 120. It is in this LTHP portion of the system that the process material becomes hydrated or saturated with the process liquid.

The rate of flow of the slurry or emulsion may be controlled by either the length of the first reactor or by the motor speed of the motor M1 for the auger. The rate of flow must be sufficient to allow sufficient dwell time for the hydrolysis reaction under the pressure. Again, as with the first embodiment, the high pressure of the LTHP portion keeps volatile components, such as hydrocarbons, dissolved in the solution of organic material. The operating parameters of temperature, pressure, flow velocity and dwell time must be balanced to produce permit proper saturation or hydration.

The slurry, under pressure, quickly moves within the second slurry conduit 122 into the second reactor 128. This second reactor 128 receives the slurry and both reduces the pressure applied to the slurry from the first pressure of the first reactor to a second, lower pressure, and heats the slurry from the first preestablished temperature of the first reactor to a second preestablished temperature. This portion of the system including the second reactor 128 may be referred to as the high-temperature-low pressure (HTLP) portion of the processor. The sudden drop in the pressure combined with the sharp increase in the temperature within the second reactor causes the slurry to reform into a first by-product comprised of solids and at least one second by-product comprised of volatile gas and liquid oils (hydrocarbons).

Because the slurry which is hot and under pressure in the first reactor, moves to the second reactor, which is hotter but at a lower pressure, the slurry undergoes an explosive expansion upon the opening of the second flow valve.

The second reactor 128 is constructed like the first reactor 120. This second reactor is a cylindrical shell having an input end 127 and an output end 129 and internal means for moving the slurry from the input end to the output end. The means for moving the slurry is preferably also an internal screw or auger. The screw or auger is driven by an external motor M2 attached to one end of the auger.

As with the first reactor, external heating means, such as helical heater wires are wrapped around the cylindrical shell of the second reactor 128 to heat the contents. A layer of insulation is placed over the heating wires to reduce heat loss within the reactor and to prevent injury or damage to people and items located external the reactor.

The rate of flow of the slurry or emulsion may be controlled by either the length of the second reactor or by the motor speed of the motor M2 for the auger. The rate of flow must be sufficient to allow sufficient dwell time for the reaction or reformation. The operating parameters of temperature, pressure, flow velocity and dwell time must be balanced to produce permit this reaction or reformation.

At the output end 129, in the bottom of the reactor there is an opening and bottom pipe 175 for permitting the solids which fall to the bottom of the reactor 128 to continue their fall and be removed to a separate solids storing facility 132. In addition, at the output end 129, in an upper position, of the second reactor 128, there is an opening and an outlet conduit 176 for permitting the vapor oil (volatile gas and

liquid) to escape from the second reactor. This vapor oil flows through the first branch of the outlet conduit 176 into a second branch of the outlet conduit 177.

5 As shown in Figure 4, the second output branch 177 is concentric with and parallel to the first slurry conduit 117. The flow within these concentric conduits 177,117 is counter. As a result, and seen in Figure 2, the slurry flowing schematically upward in
10 the first slurry conduit is warmed by the vapor oil flowing schematically downward in the second branch of the output conduit. At the same time, the vapor oil is cooled by the counterflowing cooler slurry.

 This vapor oil flows from the second branch
15 of the output conduit 177 into a third branch of the output conduit 178. An output valve 179 is disposed within this third branch 178. Accordingly, the pressure will be the same in the system between the second flow valve 126 and the output valve 179. While
20 the vapor oil is in the second and third branches 177,178 of the output conduit, the pressure and temperature are regulated to cause the process liquid, such as water, and oil to condense and separate from the volatile components which remain in a gaseous
25 state.

 The volatile gas can be, if desired, burned or further condensed or separated as shown in the first embodiment of the present invention.

 The process liquid and oil traveling in the
30 output conduit's third branch 178 passes through a third heat exchanger. For example, a separate coolant, such as water or glycol, can be stored in a coolant chamber 183 and transported through coolant pipes 181,182 adjacent to or concentric and counter to the
35 vapor oil in the third branch of the output conduit 178. A counterflow schematic is shown in Figure 5.

The process liquid and oil in the third branch of the output conduit 178 continue into a gravity separator wherein the oil and process liquid is separated by conventional means. The process liquid
5 passes through a lower opening in the separator 180 and into a return pipe 181 which is connected to the liquid reservoir 147 and recycled through the system. The oil passes through a separate opening in the separator 180, into an oil pipe 182 with an oil filter 183 disposed
10 therein, and to a storage oil tank 184.

A venting system is provided to remove all vapors. This venting system comprises a primary vent pipe 190 that is connected to and fed by a liquid reservoir vent pipe 193, an oil tank vent pipe 192, and
15 a separator vent pipe 191. An in-line one way valve 194 prevents the reverse flow of the vapors and the contamination of the tanks. The primary vent pipe 190 feeds into a second branch pipe 192 which is connected to an accumulator 196, connection pipe 197 and storage
20 tank 198.

The system just described may be fully automated. The temperatures, pressures, dwell times and valves may be manually controlled from a control panel or automatically controlled by a computer.

25 This process may also be used with inorganic process materials. For example, if the process material is ferrous oxide (Fe_2O_3) and the process liquid is water, one can use the above described system to produce steam (H_2O and O_2) and molten pure iron.
30 Steam would have to be drawn from both reactors.

To desulfurize coal one can use coal as the process material. Three reactors are employed instead of two reactors. There would be two first reactors for saturating the coal, the first using water as the
35 process liquid and the second, in series with the first

reactor, using an oxidizing agent, such as Hydrogen Peroxide (1-3 %).

It should be apparent from the foregoing that novel and improved processors, which may be referred to as thermal depolymerization processors (TDP), have been provided. The processor may be operated to convert a variety of materials into useful and valuable products. For example, products such as garbage, leaves and grass which otherwise would create environmental problems may be converted to useful products, thereby avoiding the need for landfills and incinerators. The processors may be built in various sizes such as a small unit for a single family home to a large unit for use by a municipality or a large hospital.

The following are specific examples using the second embodiment of the present invention:

First Example-

- 20 Type of process material placed into hopper 110: most organics
Temperature of material in hopper 110: 30° - 150° C
Temperature of material in material input conduit 114 between hopper 110 and first material pump 116a: 150° C
25 Pressure of material in material input conduit 114 between hopper 110 and first material pump 116a: 0 psi (ATM)
30 Temperature of water in tank 147: 30° - 90° C
Pressure of water in tank 147: 0 psi
Temperature of slurry in first slurry conduit 117 between pump 116 and first reactor 120: 150° - 250° C
35 Pressure of slurry in first slurry conduit 117 between pump 116 and first reactor 120: 150 - 600 psi
Temperature of slurry between input 118 and output 121 of first reactor 120 (valve 126): 150° - 250° C
40 Pressure of slurry between input 118 and output 121 of first reactor 120 (valve 126): 150 - 600 psi
Time of slurry travelling between input 118 and output 121 of first reactor 120 (valve 126): 10 - 15 min.
45 Temperature of slurry between input 127 (valve 126) and output 129 of second reactor 128: 300° - 500° C

Pressure of slurry between input 127 (valve 126) and output 129 of second reactor 128: 0 - 200 psi
Time of slurry travelling between input 127 (valve 126) and output 129 of second reactor 128: 10 - 15 min.

5 Temperature of vapor oil in third branch of output conduit 178 after valve 179: 30° C
Pressure of vapor oil in third branch of output conduit 178 after valve 179: 0 psi - 20 inches Hg

10 Type of solid produced by process: carbon (pure)

Type of liquid produced by process: very light viscosity crude oil (5-30 carbons) (high grade cracking stock)/(#3-#4 diesel fuel)

15 Type of gas produced by process: a mixture having 1-5 carbon (methane-pentane)

20 Second Example-

Type of process material placed into hopper 110: Triglyceride (fat)
Temperature of material in hopper 110: 150° C

25 Temperature of material in material input conduit 114 between hopper 110 and first material pump 116a: 150° C
Pressure of material in material input conduit 114 between hopper 110 and first material pump 116a: 0 psi
30 (ATM)

Temperature of water in tank 147: 30° - 90° C
Pressure of water in tank 147: 0 psi

35 Temperature of slurry in first slurry conduit 117 between pump 116 and first reactor 120: at least 150° C
Pressure of slurry in first slurry conduit 117 between pump 116 and first reactor 120: 200 psi

40 Temperature of slurry between input 118 and output 121 of first reactor 120 (valve 126): 200° C
Pressure of slurry between input 118 and output 121 of first reactor 120 (valve 126): 200 psi
Time of slurry travelling between input 118 and output
45 121 of first reactor 120 (valve 126): 15 min.

Temperature of slurry between input 127 (valve 126) and output 129 of second reactor 128: 400° C

50 Pressure of slurry between input 127 (valve 126) and output 129 of second reactor 128: 100 psi
Time of slurry travelling between input 127 (valve 126) and output 129 of second reactor 128: 15 min.

Temperature of oil product in third branch of output conduit 178 after valve 179: 30° C
Pressure of vapor product in third branch of output conduit 178 after valve 179: 0 psi

5

Type of solid produced by process: coke

Type of liquid produced by process: very light viscosity crude oil (5-30 carbons) (high grade cracking stock)/(#3-#4 diesel fuel)

10

Type of gas produced by process: a mixture having 1-5 carbon (methane-pentane)

15 Third Example-

Type of process material placed into hopper 110: coal
Temperature of material in hopper 110: 30° C

20 Temperature of material in material input conduit 114 between hopper 110 and first material pump 116a: 30° - 150° C

Pressure of material in material input conduit 114 between hopper 110 and first material pump 116a: 0 psi
(ATM)

25

Temperature of water in tank 147: 30° C
Pressure of water in tank 147: 0 psi

30 Temperature of slurry in first slurry conduit 117 between pump 116 and first reactor 120: 200° C
Pressure of slurry in first slurry conduit 117 between pump 116 and first reactor 120: 600 psi

35 Temperature of slurry between input 118 and output 121 of first reactor 120 (valve 126): 250° C
Pressure of slurry between input 118 and output 121 of first reactor 120 (valve 126): 600 psi
Time of slurry travelling between input 118 and output 121 of first reactor 120 (valve 126): 15 min.

40

Temperature of slurry between input 127 (valve 126) and output 129 of second reactor 128: 500° C
Pressure of slurry between input 127 (valve 126) and output 129 of second reactor 128: 100 psi
Time of slurry travelling between input 127 (valve 126) and output 129 of second reactor 128: 15 min.

45

Temperature of oil product in third branch of output conduit 178 after valve 179: 30° C
Pressure of vapor oil in third branch of output conduit 178 after valve 179: 0 psi

50

Type of solid produced by process: carbon (pure)

- 24 -

Type of liquid produced by process: very light viscosity crude oil (5-30 carbons) (high grade cracking stock)/(#3-#4 diesel fuel

- 5 Type of gas produced by process: a mixture having 1-5 carbon (methane-pentane)

While the specific embodiments have been
10 illustrated and described, numerous modifications come to mind without significantly departing from the spirit of the invention and the scope of protection is only limited by the scope of the accompanying Claims.

CLAIMS

I CLAIM:

1. A process for converting a process material into other useful products, comprising the steps of:

- 5 a) mixing the process material with a process liquid to create a flowable emulsion,
- b) pumping said emulsion to an expansion container while preheating said emulsion with at least one heated fluid from
10 the process,
- c) further quickly reducing the pressure on said emulsion while quickly heating said emulsion with a heating source to separate volatiles from solids in said
15 emulsion,
- d) collecting said separated volatiles, and
- e) collecting said separated solids.

2. A process as set forth in Claim 1, including the step of increasing said pressure on said separated volatiles while cooling said separated volatiles to produce separate components.

3. A thermal depolymerization processor for converting a process material into other use products comprising:

5 a) a mixer means for mixing the process material with a process liquid and for forming a flowable slurry;

b) a first system means connected to said mixer means for receiving, heating and increasing the pressure applied to said
10 slurry;

c) a second system means connected to said first system means for receiving and quickly reducing said pressure applied to said slurry and for quickly heating and reforming said slurry into a first by-product
15 and a second by-product;

d) a first collection means for receiving said first by-product from said second system means; and,

20 e) a second collection means for receiving said second by-product from said second system means.

4. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 3 including a grinder means connected to said mixer means for grinding the process material.

5. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 3 wherein said second collection means includes:

5 a) a third system means connected to said second system means for receiving, cooling and increasing said pressure applied to said second by-product, and for separating

said second by-product into a third by-product and a fourth by-product; and,

b) a third collection means for receiving said fourth by-product from said third system means.

5

6. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 5 wherein said third collection means includes:

a) a fourth system means connected to said third system means for receiving and separating said third by-product into a fifth by-product and a sixth by-product;

5

b) a fourth collection means for receiving said fifth by-product from said fourth system means; and,

10

c) a fifth collection means for receiving said sixth by-product from said fourth system means.

7. A thermal depolymerization processor for converting a process material into other useful products comprising:

- 5 a) a mixer adapted for mixing the process material with a process liquid for forming a flowable slurry;
- b) a conduit connected at one end to said mixer having at a first end a pump and at a second end a valve therein adapted for
10 receiving, heating and increasing the pressure applied to said slurry;
- c) an expansion container connected to said second end of said conduit adapted for receiving and quickly reducing said
15 pressure applied to said slurry having heating means for quickly heating and reforming said slurry into a first by-product and a second by-product;
- d) a first collection means for
20 receiving said first by-product from said expansion container; and,
- e) a second collection means for receiving said second by-product from said expansion container.

8. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 7 including a grinder connected to said mixer adapted for grinding the process material.

9. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 7 wherein said second collection means includes:

- 5 a) a primary condenser connected to said expansion container adapted for receiving, cooling and increasing said pressure applied to said second by-product

and for separating said second by-product into a third by-product and a fourth by-product; and,

5 b) a third collection means for receiving said fourth by-product from said primary condenser.

10. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 9 including:

5 a) a secondary condenser connected to said primary condenser adapted for receiving and increasing said pressure applied to said third by-product and for cooling and separating said third by-product into a fifth by-product and a sixth by-product; and,

10 b) a fourth collection means for collecting said sixth by-product from said secondary condenser.

11. A thermal depolymerization processor for converting a process material into other useful products comprising:

- 5 a) a grinder adapted for grinding the process material;
- b) a mixer adapted for receiving and mixing the process material with a process liquid to form a flowable slurry;
- 10 c) a first conduit connected at one end to said mixer having at a first end a pump and at a second end a valve therein adapted for receiving, heating and increasing the pressure applied to said slurry;
- 15 d) an expansion container connected to said second end of said first conduit adapted for receiving and quickly reducing said pressure applied to said slurry and for quickly heating and reforming said slurry into a solid by-product and a first gas by-product;
- 20 e) a primary condenser connected to said expansion container adapted for receiving, cooling and increasing said pressure applied to said first gas by-product and for separating said first gas by-product into both a second gas by-product and a liquid by-product;
- 25 f) a second conduit adapted for connecting said expansion container to said primary condenser, and transporting said first gas by-product to said primary condenser;
- 30 g) a secondary condenser connected to said primary condenser adapted for receiving and increasing said pressure applied to said second gas by-product and for cooling and
- 35

separating said second gas by-product into a third gas by-product and a fourth gas by-product;

5 h) a first collection means for receiving and collecting said solid by-product from said expansion container;

i) a second collection means for receiving and collecting said liquid by-product from said primary condenser;

10 j) a third collection means for receiving and collecting said third gas by-product from said secondary condenser; and,

15 k) a fourth collection means for receiving and collecting said fourth gas from said secondary condenser.

12. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 11 wherein;

5 a) said expansion container is heated by a burner assembly, the gas supplied to said burner assembly being one of said gas by-products, and

b) said first conduit is heated by heat emanating from said expansion container and said primary condenser.

13. A thermal depolymerization processor for converting a process material into other useful products comprising:

5 a) first receptacle means adapted for receiving the process material;

b) second receptacle means adapted for receiving a process liquid;

10 c) mixer means for mixing the process material with said process liquid to form a flowable slurry;

d) transport means for moving said slurry to first system means,

15 i) said first system means being connected to said transport means and being adapted for receiving, heating to a first preestablished temperature and applying a first pressure to said slurry;

20 e) second system means connected to said first system means for receiving and reducing said pressure applied to said slurry from said first pressure to a second pressure, for heating said slurry from said first preestablished temperature to a second preestablished temperature and for reforming said slurry into a first by-product and a second by-product, 25 said second pressure being less than said first pressure;

f) first collection means for receiving said first by-product from said second system means; and,

30 g) second collection means for receiving said second by-product from said second system means.

14. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 13 wherein said process liquid is water.

15. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 13 including means for grinding the process material is before the process material is transported to said first system means.

16. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 15 including means for straining the process material before the process material is transported to said first system means.

17. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 13 wherein said second collection means includes third system means connected to said second system means for receiving and cooling said
5 second by-product and for separating said second by-product into a third by-product and a fourth by-product.

18. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 13 wherein said first receptacle means is a hopper connected to a material input conduit, said hopper being adapted for preheating the
5 process material and said second receptacle means is a liquid tank connected to a liquid input conduit.

19. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 18 wherein said mixer means is a mixing joint having two input openings, each connected to a one of said material input conduit and said liquid
5 input conduit, and one output opening connected to a first slurry conduit.

20. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 19 wherein said transport means includes at least one pump.

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21. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 20 wherein said first system means is a first reactor and said second system means is a second reactor, each said reactor having an input end and an output end and means for moving said slurry from said input end to said output end, both said reactors being heated by external heating means.

22. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 21 wherein each said reactor is a cylindrical shell, said means for moving said slurry from said input end to said output end is an internal auger, and said external heating means is a heater wrapped around said cylindrical shell.

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23. A thermal depolymerization processor for converting a process material into other useful products comprising:

- 5 a) a first receptacle adapted for receiving the process material;
- b) a second receptacle adapted for receiving a process liquid;
- c) mixer means for mixing the process material with said process liquid to form a flowable slurry;
- 10 d) transport means for moving said slurry to a first reactor,
 - i) said first reactor adapted for receiving, heating to a first preestablished temperature and applying a first pressure to said slurry;
 - 15 e) a second reactor connected to said first reactor for receiving and reducing said pressure applied to said slurry from said first pressure to a second pressure, for heating said slurry from said first preestablished temperature to a second preestablished temperature and for reforming said slurry into a first by-product and a second by-product, said second pressure being less than said first
 - 20 pressure;
 - f) a first collection means for receiving said first by-product from said second reactor; and,
 - g) a second collection means for
 - 25 receiving said second by-product from said second reactor.

24. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 wherein said process liquid is water.

25. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 including a grinder adapted for grinding the process material before the process material is transported to said first reactor.

26. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 25 including a strainer adapted for straining the process material before the process material is transported to said first reactor.

27. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 wherein said second collection means includes a condenser connected to said second reactor adapted for receiving and cooling said second by-product and for separating said second by-product into a third by-product and a fourth by-product.

28. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 wherein said first receptacle adapted for receiving the process material is a hopper connected to a material input conduit.

29. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 wherein said transport means conduit is adapted for preheating the process material.

30. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 wherein said second receptacle is a liquid tank connected to a liquid input conduit.

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31. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 wherein said mixer means for mixing the process material with said process liquid to form a flowable slurry is a mixing joint having two input openings; each connected to a one of said material input conduit and said liquid input conduit, and one output opening connected to a first slurry conduit.

32. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 wherein said transport means includes at least one pump.

33. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 wherein said first reactor has an input end and an output end and means for moving said slurry from said input end to said output end, said first reactor being heated by first external heating means.

34. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 23 wherein said first reactor is a first cylindrical shell, said means for moving said slurry from said input end to said output end is an internal auger, and said first external heating means is a heater wrapped around said first cylindrical shell.

35. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 34 wherein said second reactor also has an input end and an output end and means for moving said slurry from said input end to said output end, said second reactor further being heated by second external heating means.

36. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 35 wherein said second reactor is a second cylindrical shell, said means for moving said slurry from said input end to said output end is an
5 internal auger, and said second external heating means is a heater wrapped around said second cylindrical shell.

37. A thermal depolymerization processor for converting a process material into other useful products comprising:

- 5 a) a hopper connected to a material input conduit adapted for receiving the process material;
- b) a liquid tank connected to a liquid input conduit for receiving a process liquid;
- 10 c) a mixing joint adapted for mixing the process material with said process liquid to form a flowable slurry having two input openings, each connected to one of said material input conduit and said liquid input conduit, and one output opening connected to a first slurry conduit, said first slurry
- 15 conduit being adapted for preheating said supply;
- d) a pump adapted means for moving said slurry through said first slurry conduit to a first reactor,
 - 20 i) said first reactor adapted for receiving, heating to a first preestablished temperature and applying a first pressure to said slurry;
 - e) a second reactor connected to said first reactor for receiving and reducing said pressure
 - 25 applied to said slurry from said first pressure to a second pressure, for heating said slurry from said first preestablished temperature to a second preestablished temperature and for reforming said slurry into a first by-product and a second by-product,
 - 30 said second pressure being less than said first pressure;
 - f) a first collection means for receiving said first by-product from said second reactor; and,
 - 35 g) a condenser connected to said second reactor adapted for receiving and cooling said

second by-product and for separating said second by-product into a third by-product and a fourth by-product.

38. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 37 wherein said process liquid is water.

39. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 38 including a grinder adapted for grinding the process material before the process material is transported to said first reactor.

40. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 39 including a strainer adapted for straining the process material before the process material is transported to said first reactor.

41. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 40 wherein each said reactor has an input end and an output end and means for moving said slurry from said input end to said output end, both
5 said reactors being heated by external heating means.

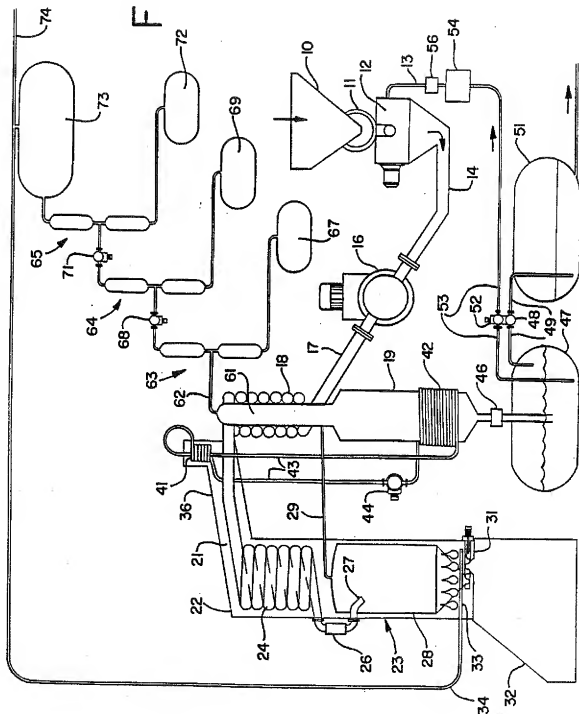
42. The thermal depolymerization processor of Claim 41 wherein each said reactor is a cylindrical shell, said means for moving said slurry from said input end to said output end is an internal
5 auger, and said external heating means is a heater wrapped around said cylindrical shell.

43. A process for converting a process material into other useful products, comprising the steps of:

- 5 a) mixing the process material with a process liquid create flowable slurry;
- b) transporting said slurry to a reactor;
- c) heating said slurry to a first preestablished temperature and applying a first
10 pressure to said slurry while said slurry is in said first reactor;
- d) reducing said pressure applied to said slurry from said first pressure to a second pressure, heating said slurry from
15 said first preestablished temperature to a second preestablished temperature and reforming said slurry into a first by-product and a second by-product, said second pressure being less than said first pressure;
- 20 e) collecting said first by-product;
- and,
- f) collecting said second by-product.

44. The process of Claim 43 including the step of cooling said second by-product and separating said second by-product into a third by-product and a fourth by-product.

FIG. 1



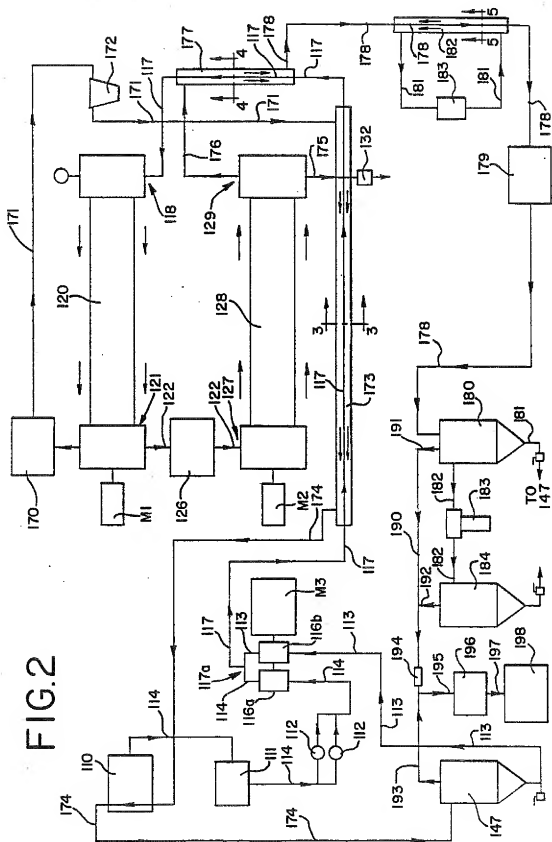


FIG. 3

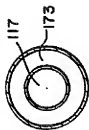


FIG. 4

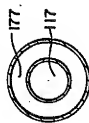


FIG. 5

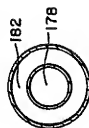
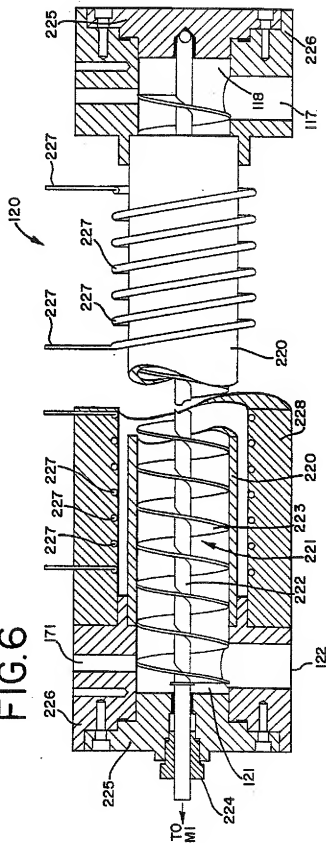


FIG. 6



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US 93/08697

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (If several classification symbols apply, indicate all) * According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC IPC ⁵ : C 02 F 11/10, C 10 B 53/00, B 09 B 3/00, C 10 G 1/02		
II. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum Documentation Searched † Classification System Classification Symbols IPC ⁵ C 02 F 11/00, C 10 B 53/00, C 10 B 57/00, B 09 B 3/00, C 10 G 1/00		
Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation to the Extent that such Documents are included in the Fields Searched *		
III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT*		
Category *	Citation of Document, ¹² with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹³	Relevant to Claim No. ¹⁴
A	US, A, 4 657 681 (HUGHES et al.) 14 April 1987 (14.04.87), abstract; fig.. --	1, 3, 7, 11, 13, 23, 37
A	DD, A, 208 965 (ADW DER DDR ZU F. ISOTOPEN UND STRAHLENFORSCHUNG) 18 April 1984 (18.04.84), claims. --	1, 3, 7, 11, 13, 23, 37
A	US, A, 4 842 728 (BAKER) 27 June 1989 (27.06.89), fig. 1; claim 1 (cited in the application). --	1, 3, 7, 11, 13, 23, 37
A	DE, B2, 2 130 476 (TEXACO DEVELOPMENT) 19 April 1979 (19.04.79), column 4, line 58 - column 6, line 17..	1, 3, 7, 11, 13, 23, 37
* Special categories of cited documents ** *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date *L* document which may throw doubt on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principles or theory underlying the invention *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step *Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art. *Z* document member of the same patent family		
IV. CERTIFICATION		
Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search 03 January 1994		Date of Mailing of this International Search Report 24.01.94
International Searching Authority EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE		Signature of Authorized Officer KÖRBER e.h.

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT (CONTINUED FROM THE SECOND SHEET)		
Category *	Citation of Document, ** with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to Claim No.
A	-- DE, A, 3 734 091 (LYONNAISE DES EAUX) 14 April 1988 (14.04.88), claims.	1,3,7, 11,13, 23,37
	--	
A	DE, B2, 2 609 330 (HANOVER RESEARCH CORP.) 08 May 1980 (08.05.80), claims.	1,3,7, 11,13, 23,37

ANHANG

zum internationalen Recherchen-
bericht über die internationale
Patentanmeldung Nr.

ANNEX

to the International Search
Report to the International Patent
Application No.

ANNEXE

au rapport de recherche inter-
national relatif à la demande de brevet
international n°

PCT/US 93/08697 SAE B0160

In diesen Anhang sind die Mitglieder
der Patentfamilien der im obenge-
nannten internationalen Recherchenbericht
angeführten Patentedokumente angegeben.
Diese Angaben dienen nur zur Unter-
richtung und erfolgen ohne Gewähr.

This Annex lists the patent family
members relating to the patent documents
cited in the above-mentioned inter-
national search report. The Office is
in no way liable for these particulars
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La présente annexe indique les
membres de la famille de brevets
relatifs aux documents de brevets cités
dans le rapport de recherche inter-
national visé ci-dessus. Les renseigne-
ments fournis sont donnés à titre indica-
tif et n'engagent pas la responsabilité
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Im Recherchenbericht angeführtes Patentedokument Patent document cited in search report Document de brevet cité dans le rapport de recherche	Datum der Veröffentlichung Publication date Date de publication	Mitglied(er) der Patentfamilie Patent family member(s) Membre(s) de la famille de brevets	Datum der Veröffentlichung Publication date Date de publication
US A 4657681	14-04-87	keine - none - rien	
DD A1 208965	18-04-84	keine - none - rien	
US A 4842728	27-06-89	AT E 58362 AU A1 37468/85 BR A 8407213 DE C0 3483613 EP A1 165305 EP B1 165305 JP B2 61500654 WO A1 8502606 US A 4636318 US A 4842692 US A 4923604 CA A1 1248475	15-11-90 26-06-85 26-11-85 20-12-90 27-02-85 14-11-90 10-04-86 20-06-85 13-01-87 27-06-89 08-05-90 10-01-89
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DE B2 2609330	08-05-80	CA A1 1030017 DE A1 2609330 DE C3 2609330 GB A 1516934 IE B 42503 JP A2 51115067 JP A2 57030785 JP A2 60099398 JP A2 60151396 MX U 3566 US A 4013516	25-04-78 23-09-76 08-01-81 05-07-78 27-08-80 09-10-76 19-02-82 03-06-85 09-08-85 17-03-81 22-03-77